

Song Exploder
Spoon - Inside Out
Episode 16

Hrishikesh: You're listening to Song Exploder, where musicians take apart their songs and piece by piece tell the story of how they were made. My name is Hrishikesh Hirway.

("Inside Out" by SPOON)

Hrishikesh: The band Spoon was formed in 1993 by singer Britt Daniel and drummer Jim Eno. They've released eight albums, including their most recent record, *They Want My Soul*, which came out in August 2014. In this episode, Jim Eno breaks down the song "Inside Out," explaining how it went from the original demo to the finished album version, including what other music influenced the recording. Plus, we'll hear from their co-producer, Dave Fridmann, whose other credits include: The Flaming Lips album *The Soft Bulletin*, and MGMT's *Oracular Spectacular*. Here's Spoon on Song Exploder.

("Inside Out" by SPOON)

(Music fades)

Jim: Hi, this is Jim Eno. I play drums in Spoon. So there's Britt Daniel, who is the songwriter, guitar player, and lead vocalist. There is Rob Pope, who is the bass player. Eric Harvey, who plays keys, guitar. Alex Fischel, who plays keys, guitars, and a lot of other things. We're talking about "Inside Out" off of our latest record, *They Want My Soul*. This is the first way I heard it.

(Piano)

Jim: You know, the thing that I really love about this demo is that intro. It's not on the record. It's in five [laughter].

(Piano)

(Vocals join: "Time's gone inside out / Time gets distorted when / There's intense gravity / I don't got time for holy rollers / Though they may wash my feet / And I can't be their soldier")

(Music fades)

Jim: Britt's always trying to throw curve balls at us. So like, sometimes I'll get something like this, and it'll be a demo, and he'll be like, "Hey, this is something I'm working on. And he'll, like, just sort of see what people do with that. He'll play a demo, and he'll be like, "Okay, let's figure out different ways to approach this." So it would be like, "Okay, Elvis Costello, I don't know, Iggy Pop, what would you do?" And then, we'll just imagine, like, how a band like that would actually approach this song. It never sounds really like Iggy Pop or U2, it always sounds like Spoon, but there's just these little things that seep in so. Britt played the demo, but then he was like, "Hey, I have this idea. Let's approach this like Dr. Dre's *2001*."

("Still D.R.E." by DR.DRE ft. SNOOP DOGG)

Jim: There's a lot of slower tempos on that record, but a lot of really cool, hooky, simple melodic parts. You know, I think moving it into more of a beat oriented style was the right thing to do.

(Music fades)

Jim: So we listened to some of *2001*. Then we just played the song a bunch of times.

(Synth pad, bass, and drums)

(Keyboard and drums)

Jim: I did what I thought, like, a Dr. Dre drum beat would be [laughter].

(Vocals, keyboard, bass, and drums: "Time's gone inside out / Time gets distorted when")

(Synth pad joins: "There's intense gravity")

(Music fades)

Jim: So then you hear the new demo. I knew we were going to, sort of, create a, sort of like a sample kit to replace my drums.

(Beat)

Jim: So what I did, here at the studio, is I was working on building up snare samples, and kick samples, and things that I thought sounded good together that we took

to Dave Fridmann's. And we started the song, he pulled those up, and used some of them, and some of his to create the kick and snare that's on the record. Fine with me, even though I'm the drummer, it's all about the record and the song, you know?

(Beat)

(Beat ends)

Jim: This song has three solos, three keyboard solos. I think that's a Spoon first, by the way. You'll hear this harpsichord thing.

(Harpsichord)

Jim: I worked with Alex on that little part.

(Harpsichord)

Jim: I think it was just his Nord harpsichord sound, but we wanted to get something that sounded like a hip hop kind of sample thing.

(Harpsichord)

Jim: One of the things about like hip hop samples is they're taking it from another place. And I feel like it's cool when sometimes they fall out of time, creating this sort of weird tension kind of thing [mimics harpsichord], you know? That kind of thing.

(Harpsichord ends)

Jim: You know, I was sort of pushing Alex to not be as in time at the end of that line. The second solo at 3:22 was the more difficult one.

(Keyboard)

Jim: Yeah, it was a tough one. We were looking for something simple; hooky, but also had a really cool sound to it. And the problem is that all three of those are incredibly subjective to any different person. This second solo here went through a lot of iterations. Finally, we came up with something that just worked really well.

(Keyboard)

(Keyboard ends)

Jim: If you ever listen to old Marvin Gaye stuff, there is a sound with the snare

("What's Goin' On" (Rhythm 'N' Strings Mix) by MARVIN GAYE)

Jim: that I had never been able to figure out what it was when I started recording. And then, I found this one version. A mix version of a song that basically had these bongos super dry.

("What's Goin' On" (Rhythm 'N' Strings Mix) by MARVIN GAYE)

Jim: And what it ended up being that sound is, it sounds really great with the snare.

("What's Goin' On" (Rhythm 'N' Strings Mix) by MARVIN GAYE)

Jim: So what I did is, I didn't know if it was going to be used. I just wanted to try a Bongo part.

(Bongo)

(Bongo ends)

Jim: You'll throw down ideas, and you never know if they're going to get used. And, you know, we trust Dave, and the way Dave would mix is we would be out of the room for about eight hours. And then, we would come back in. We would listen to the song. And I remember him saying something like, "Boy, you know, I pulled that bongo track up.

(Bongo)

Jim: I was just like, "This is never going to work." And then, he's like, "But then I started putting it in," and he's like, "I love it."

(Piano, bass, and beat join)

(Music ends)

Jim: I don't know. I was really happy that he liked it. Because I thought it was a good idea.

Dave: You know, it's really just about keeping messing with it until you feel that emotional connection to it. My name is Dave Fridmann, and I'm a producer.

Jim: We've always co-produced the records with outside producers. It's good. It allows us to get other input and things like that. We had wanted to work with him for a while. I mean, I'm a big Flaming Lips, and I love that MGMT stuff he did, and Tame Impala. The Sleater-Kinney record, he did. You know, to be honest, I was a little bit nervous because I was like, "What is Spoon plus like *Soft Bulletin* going to even sound like?" That's like a crazy thing to even imagine what it's going to be. I don't know. I feel like this record is, sort of, what that is.

Dave: [laughter] I was excited too. I think it's great when people have that sort of frame of reference.

Jim: We tend to have the vocals pretty dry. You know, we don't like reverb, we like it right up in your face. And we were like, "Well, maybe on this one, we can try a little bit of an effect," or we would always give Dave, like, some leeway on things.

Dave: We'd go ahead, and I would throw the kitchen sink at a song, in terms of effects and stuff. Basically, I was trying to set a banquet for them, and then they could come in, and pick whatever they like out of it, and we just turn off the other things.

Jim: What he used on this was, I feel like it really draws you in, and it was a tape slap from one of his old, I think, it's quarter inch reel to reels that he ran the vocal through. But it has this, just this buzz to it that I just really love. It really makes the vocal, like, very special to me.

(Vocals: "There's intense gravity in you / There's intense gravity in you / I'm just your satellite / I'm just your satellite / Ooh, and I know that time's gone inside out / And now it's only like I told you / Mmm, though they may wash my feet / They do not make me complete")

(Digital zero)

Jim: Okay, so this part was something that Britt came up with, at this point, everything muted, like, into, like, digital zero.

(Digital zero)

Jim: Because it'd be cool, man [laughter]. Yeah. You know, you just hear something in your head, and it's like, "Hey, I'm feeling something at this point. Let's try to mute every instrument all at the same time. What would that sound like?" You know? Then Dave does the edit, and we're like, "I don't know. Maybe, maybe. Nah, let's add a couple of things back in." And that's the kind of conversations that we have [laughter].

(Music ends)

Hrishikesh: And now, here's "Inside Out," by Spoon, in its entirety.

("Inside Out" by SPOON)

Hrishikesh: Visit songexploder.net to learn more about Spoon, including links to buy the song "Inside Out," as well as the mix version of "What's Goin' On" by Marvin Gaye.

You can find all the past and future episodes of Song Exploder at songexploder.net or on iTunes, Stitcher, or wherever you download podcasts. Find this show on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram @SongExploder. Song Exploder is a proud member of Radiotopia, from PRX, a curated network of extraordinary story-driven shows. Learn more at radiotopia.fm. My name is Hrishikesh Hirway, thanks for listening.